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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2008

In Today's Papers

EU Process Depends on Lawsuit

All papers: Today's lead news story in papers focuses on the outcome of yesterday's discussions the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). PACE approved a report prepared by Belgian MP Luc Van den Brande on "The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey." The report said it may be necessary to activate a monitoring mechanism for Turkey because the closure of the ruling AKP would result in decreased political stability in Turkey and would negatively affect Turkey's EU bid.

Conservative-nationalist Turkiye writes, "The Council of Europe Sends a Harsh Message to Turkey," as, "Banning a ruling party would lead to a social crisis and would make EU accession impossible."

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak's front-page banner headline reads, "The Council of Europe Issues a Stern Warning against the Judicial Coup." Islamist-oriented Zaman writes, "PACE calls the ban of the AKP, 'a blow to democracy,'" as the goal of the debates, "was not to punish Turkey, but to rescue democracy," as AKP closure would, "render Turkey to the league of fragile democracies." Mainstream Sabah carries the headline, "The EU Process Depends on the Outcome of the Closure Case." Mainstream Hurriyet notes, "PACE Adopts a Harsh Stance on the Suit against the AKP," and reports, "PACE adopted a report that was ordered by AKP officials." In addition, Hurriyet carries excerpts of the joint declaration from opposition CHP and MHP, calling PACE's declaration, "an intervention in the Turkish judicial process." Liberal Radikal notes, "The Closure of the AKP Would Cause Europe to Consider Our Democracy a Second Class Democracy," as, "PACE sent the message that banning the AKP would be a judicial coup, which could be followed by a military coup."

Mainstream Milliyet reports, "PACE Strongly Supports the AKP."

Mainstream Vatan writes, "PACE Warns Turkey that AKP Closure Could Lead to Turkey's Placement on the Blacklist of Troubled Democracies," and, "yesterday's PACE meeting threw strong support behind the AKP." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet comments, "PACE Is Monitoring Turkey," and thus, "PACE poses a threat to Turkey."

EDITORIAL OPINION: Turkish Political Debates

"The Military's Statement"

Ercan Karakas wrote in leftist Birgun (6/27): "Turkey is going through a serious political crisis. The political system, more importantly the ruling party, prefers to work for its own agenda rather than defending democracy for everyone. In addition, the ruling party does not seek consensus and dialogue in order to decrease political tensions. A solution to Turkey's political problem must be found within its democratic structure, regardless of the nature of the political tensions. Therefore, it is wrong for the military to devise a plan to manipulate public opinion for the purposes of pushing its own political agenda. When the Turkish General Staff's documents regarding this plan were revealed, TGS declared, 'there is no such officially approved plan or document.' This statement is positive, but not satisfactory because some important questions remain unanswered. For example, who prepared this plan and who is behind this effort? The main opposition CHP asked TGS to initiate an investigation, but as far as I can see, no such investigation has begun. This is an important matter and should not be ignored. Why didn't the government respond to reports of the military's plans? What is government's position regarding an investigation into this issue? We are still waiting."

"Will the Constitutional Court Go on Vacation this summer?" Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal (6/27): "From a procedural perspective, the closure case against the AKP should be resolved soon. However, there is not a binding calendar or a legal deadline for the Court's final decision. One thing is clear. The longer it takes for the Court to conclude this case, the more political uncertainties in Turkey will continue to grow. Traditionally, the judiciary's summer holiday begins in early August, but the Constitutional Court is not bound to that tradition.

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Speculation in Ankara indicates the Court will not recess until the AKP closure case is finalized. Once this decision is reached, everyone will benefit because we can all move on. There are three possibilities regarding the Court's decision. First, the court may close the party and impose a political ban on certain figures, including PM Erdogan. Second, the court could reject the indictment and dismiss the case. Finally, the court could find the AKP guilty of anti-secular activities, but impose a practical penalty by cutting off state treasury financing to the party. The majority of political circles in Ankara consider the first option as the most probable outcome. Very few consider the other two options as strong possibilities. Nevertheless, the court will not reach its decision based on the majority's expectations anyway."

National Security Council (NSC) Convened Yesterday
All papers report that the NSC convened for five and half hours under the chairmanship of President Gul yesterday. In a statement released after the meeting, the NSC Secretariat General said that council members discussed, "operations and measures by security forces against the terrorist organization, recent developments in Iraq, and measures which officials would take regarding Turkey's rising energy demand. The Council expressed determination that successful operations against the terrorist organization and measures regarding the fight against terrorism would be pursued. The Council members assessed the results of meetings held with Iraqi officials. The statement confirmed Turkey would contribute to efforts to stabilize Iraq and the broader region. Council members also discussed policies regarding Turkey's energy security. They decided to capitalize on domestic and renewable energy sources and increase cooperation with neighboring countries. Finally, the statement underscored Turkey's important role as a transit country for energy resources.

Intensified Operations against the PKK
Sabah and Milliyet report that Turkish security forces have stepped up operations against the PKK in the Gabar and Kupeli Mountains. In addition, military operations have intensified in the Bestler-Dereler region of Sirnak. Large numbers of commando troops were dispatched to the region, along with Cobra helicopters. Meanwhile, a group of PKK opened fire on a minibus carrying soldiers near the town of Lice in the Diyarbakir region. The driver died and four soldiers were wounded.

The Largest Number of U.S. Nuclear Bombs in any European Country are in Turkey

Milliyet cites Reuters in a report from the American Federation of Scientists, who claim the U.S. stores nuclear bombs in six European countries, including Holland, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Turkey.

Reuters cites nuclear weapons expert Hans Kristensen's report, which states the U.S. keeps most of its nuclear bombs in Turkey's Incirlik air base and Italy's Aviano air base.

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- Residential electricity prices rise 21%.
- Forest fires are reported in the resort cities of Bodrum and Antalya.
- In July, the monthly minimum wage will increase by 5% to 503.26 YTL.

International News

- President Bush announced that Washington will drop trade sanctions
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against North Korea and remove North Korea from a terrorist blacklist. Such measures are contingent on the Pyongyang government's submission of a long-awaited declaration about the extent of its nuclear activities.

- Opposition parties CHP and MHP members of PACE voiced fierce criticisms against the PACE report on Turkish democracy.
- Foreign Ministers of the G8 open talks in Kyoto, Japan to discuss North Korean and Iranian nuclear disputes.

WILSON